THINK PROJECT

Shamokin Area High School

12th Grade English

**Why Writing is Important**

Writing is power. To advance in today’s world one needs to be adept in their writing skills. Teaching students the proper way to write is highly beneficial to them. It will allow them to express themselves effectively. Whether it is for standardized testing or for a job interview, writing is everywhere. It can be the deciding factor whether one gets a job or not. Being able to communicate with others through writing is an immortal necessity.

Students are being bombarded with different styles of writing through, technology, literature, and media. At any moment of the day, students have multiple different outlets of writing at their finger tips. Students need to learn the difference between sending a friend a text and composing an essay for a class. Students need to learn structure in their writing. Showing students how to construct an effective essay will allow them to clearly express their views. The 5 paragraph essay for is something that is beneficial when it comes to standardized tests, but ultimately stifles the students voice. Students need to know why they are writing. Peter Elbow stresses this in his essay, “A Method for Teaching Writing.” He says that, “[u]ntil students have discovered, felt, and accepted criteria, a teacher simply wastes his time trying to teach students to satisfy them.” (119) For students to have passion behind their writing, they need to be taught to have pride in their work. In order to have pride in ones work, once again the writer needs to know why they are writing. Students should no longer write for the grade. There should be emotion and enthusiasm behind the writing. The student needs to write with purpose, and believe what he is writing is true. Being able to persuade your audience will benefit students their entire lives, especially in the work environment.

Although, I feel that the mechanics of writing is something to be valued, it should not be the over riding factor of writing. Mechanics should be analyzed by the student, once he/she feels their work is complete. Up until this point the student should be immersed in his/her writings. They should be creating, rather than focusing on technicalities. If a student is focusing too much on the grammar and punctuation of their writing, then they are not focusing on what they want to convey to their reader. This is something that should be stressed in the classroom just as much or more than the mechanics.

When researching before writing, students need to be able to distinguish what a credible source is. There are many sights on the internet with information that could be doctored by anyone. Being able to do this will only strengthen the student’s paper. Once students have found credible sources, they will need to know how to cite them within their paper in order to avoid plagiarism. Paraphrasing is something that needs to be taught in detail. Knowing how to find and cite sources is valuable to the student because writing is cross curricular, and an English class is where it can be taught in its entirety without taking any time away from other topics.

Through a unit solely dedicated to a writing workshop, will teach students, that there is not set writing process. It is not a series of steps (pre-writing, drafting, revision, proofreading, and publishing) that are to be strictly followed. The steps presented in this scholastically accepted writing process are intertwined and constantly repetitive. A writer does not naturally go from one step to the next. In the natural writing process, these steps are repetitive, both physically and mentally. Students should feel free to change their writings. It is not cut and dry. They should not feel that just because they have moved onto drafting that cannot return to pre-writing.

In this unit, students will focus on expressive writing. Journaling will be a key factor in this. Through journaling students will become more familiar with writing. As they practice writing often, it will become natural to them. Students will work together to improve their writings. Having a peer look over your work could be more insightful than solely having the teacher analyze the writing. Students should feel comfortable with their writings. Teaching students that writing should not be feared or dreaded is something this unit strives to accomplish Students should not fear that red ink is going to slaughter their final products.

**Plan**

After observing Mr. B’s classroom, and reading student writing samples, we saw a need for writing practice and instruction. The students do not seem to respond to traditional writing instructional methods, so we aim to take a more expressivist approach to the teaching of writing. We intend to have them become more intrinsically motivated to write, and we believe that the best way to do this is to have them choose topics and write for real-world situations. Each writing activity will be based around a topic of the student’s choice. We will have them write things like professional e-mails, business letters, and excerpts from college essays to help prepare their writing for real-world situations. We will also be helping Mr. B guide the students through a research project for his class. Our activities are aimed to help students connect the academic writing they are doing for Mr. B’s class to the real-world kind of writing they will need in life beyond high school.

Based on a survey that we had the students fill out, most of them are not doing much writing other than on social media sites, and most of them do not care much about writing or see the value in it. Our aim is to introduce to them to more practical ways of writing that will benefit them in their future endeavors. Since most of the students indicated on the surveys that they plan on attending a college or university for at least two years, they will need to know how to write in an academic setting. Our goal is to increase their confidence level in their own writing, so they will be better equipped for this caliber of writing. Our approach is to make writing real and relevant for them. We will also build our activities so that they are prepared for the final products, which include one business letter and one final research paper. These products are in conjunction with goals that both we and Mr. Bailey have determined for the students.